Facilitator's guide to the Virtual Role Play Game



European Parliament

Contents

1 Introduction 3
- 1.1 Purpose of the guide 4

2 About the game 5
- 2.1 Objectives 5
- 2.2 Who can play? 6
- 2.3 Topics of the game 6
- 2.4 Personal data in the game 6

3 How to play the game 7
- 3.1 Group size 7
- 3.2 Duration 7
- 3.3 Overview 7
- 3.4 Room set-up 8
- 3.5 Material 9
- 3.6 Technical set-up 9
- 3.7 How to start and run the game 10

4 Step by step through the game 11
- 4.1 Starting the game 12
- 4.2 Introduction to the law proposal and game tutorial 12
- 4.3 Political groups introduction 12
- 4.4 Committee groups introduction and vote 13
- 4.5 Political groups regrouping 13
- 4.6 Plenary discussion and voting part I 14
- 4.7 Big twist 15
- 4.8 Plenary session and voting part II 15
- 4.9 Stakeholders' reactions and game insights 15
- 4.10 In case of rejection 15

5 Before the game 16
- 5.1 How to represent opinions different from my own? 16
- 5.2 Getting to know the European Union 18
- 5.3 Getting to know the European Parliament 19

6 During the game 22
- 6.1 Reality checks 22
- 6.2 Glossary 25
- 6.3 Game rules 27

7 After the game 29
- 7.1 Debriefing session 29
- 7.2 Written feedback or evaluation 30
- 7.3 Together.eu 30
- 7.4 Europa Experience offer 30

8 Annexes 31
- 8.1 Annex I: Evaluation/Feedback form 31
- 8.2 Annex II: Printouts for the gameVRPG Activity cards 32

1
Introduction

Welcome to the facilitator's guide to the European Parliament Virtual Role Play Game!

This guide provides an overview of the game, as well as resources to offer both you and your group of players a **fruitful immersive learning experience**.

In this guide, you will find all the information you need to run the game smoothly, as well as learn how to prepare the players for the best experience before, during and after the game.

The guide also offers a number of additional preparatory activities to help players get into their roles, and a debriefing session focusing on what they learnt and the overall experience, depending how much time you can dedicate to the game.

Enjoy the game!

1.1
Purpose of the guide

This guide is intended as a support tool for game facilitators in different educational settings:

- **Teachers in schools with students aged 16 years and over**
- **Trainers and facilitators in non-formal education programmes and activitie;**
- **Workers in local community/youth centres or similar**
- **Any other setting that might be suitable for playing the game while respecting the intended purpose**

This guide provides facilitators with information on how to set up the game online and what is needed in the room to play the game, as well as a step-by-step explanation of the game flow.

Additionally, you will find background information on the **EU** and **Parliament**, suggested preparatory activities to help players get into their assigned roles and some guiding questions for a debrief focusing on what players learnt from the game.



2
About the game

The virtual role play game is a simulation of the European Union's decision-making process.

Players step into the shoes of a **Member of the European Parliament (MEP)** and are assigned to fictional political groups. Together with their fellow **MEPs**, players must debate, negotiate, find compromises and vote on a law proposal to improve the lives of people across the **European Union**. By offering a simplified version of the **EU** legislative procedure, the game aims to make it easy to understand **Parliament's** role in the overall process and **MEPs'** work and responsibilities as directly elected representatives of the people. The goal is to give players a first-hand experience of democracy and encourage them to be engaged citizens.

The game is designed to be played by groups in different educational settings, from classrooms to youth centres and non-formal education programmes. Players sit and interact in the same physical space while playing the game on their own devices and following instructions on the facilitator's screen. The game can also be played in set-ups other than the ones described above by anyone aged 16 and over, provided the game is used for its intended purpose.

2.1 Objectives

The European Parliament wants to give young people across Europe an opportunity to step into the shoes of an MEP and experience the reality of the EU law- and decision-making process in their own schools or communities through this educational, immersive and fun experience.

The game focuses on the importance of working together for the greater benefit of society, encouraging compromise and interaction amongst players and providing a platform to improve skills including public speaking and diplomacy.

Finally, Parliament hopes the virtual role play game will motivate people to get more involved in European democracy in their everyday lives and empower them as potential voters at the European elections by improving their understanding of how the European Union works and Parliament's role as the representative of EU citizens.



2.2
Who can play?

The virtual role play game's main target audience is young people aged 16 and over, with no prior knowledge of the European Union or the European Parliament.

The game has been designed in such a way that anyone can enjoy it, regardless of background or experience.



2.3
Topics of the game

- **European Parliament**
- **Decision-making**
- **EU legislative procedure**
- **European Union**
- **Participatory democracy**
- **Soft skills development**

2.4
Personal data in the game

The **IP address** is always the same for all players in each game session. There is no geolocation or collection of any data. The game stores the following information on the player's own computer: the PlayerID that has been randomly assigned, the current game state, the last room code successfully joined and the last local language chosen. When joining a room, the room code will be present in the URL.

For the game to function properly, it uses **localStorage data** (a document loaded to the browser), which is cleared and removed after the game has ended.

LocalStorage data is designed to stay **'local'**. This means that stored data is not sent over the network to any server. **LocalStorage** is persistent, so if the player closes the browser, the game session can be restored, unless it was previously opened anonymously or in incognito mode.

3
How to play the game



3.1
Group size

The recommended group size is between 16 and 28 players for the best game experience.

The game can overall support between 12 and 40 players.

3.2
Duration

The game lasts for approximately 60–90 minutes.

You may wish to include an additional 30 minutes for a debriefing session.

3.3
Overview

The virtual role play game is designed to be played with the **facilitator** and **players** in the same physical place and connected on their own devices via internet to the game.

Below, you will find information on how to set up the physical space, as well as the necessary technical steps to launch and run the game.

During the game, players will be asked to sit in three different configurations depending on the activity (e.g. discussing, voting):

- **Political groups:** at the beginning of the game, players are randomly assigned to four different political groups (**Solidarity**, **Ecology**, **Tradition** and **Liberty**). At different stages of the game,

players will have to join their fellow political group members to discuss how to vote.

- **Committee groups:** players are randomly split into two committee groups to debate and vote on assigned amendments.
- **Plenary:** players sit all together (e.g. in a big circle) to debate and vote. This phase happens twice during the game. The first time, the appointed spokesperson for each political group will be invited to speak and convince fellow Members on the way forward.

3.4 Room set-up

Given the different configurations that players need to go into, use a room that is easy to arrange and spacious enough to comfortably accommodate all players.

Regardless of where the players are sitting, they should be able to see the facilitator's screen and follow the instructions at all times. The facilitator should always have the complete overview of the group and players' profiles to be able to provide support where and when needed.

Given the above, please note the recommendations below.

- The room should have a stable Wi-Fi connection, so that all players can connect simultaneously and remain connected throughout the game (unless they use their own data connection).
- There should be a big screen which can be connected to a computer and is visible to all players.
- The screen should have built-in or external loudspeakers, as the game has AI-generated voiceover, which the facilitator can switch on or off at any time during the game.
- There should be generally enough space to allow players to easily split and reconvene into the different group configurations. Furniture should also be easy to rearrange.
- There should be at least one seat per player (not necessarily a chair: pillows, stools, etc.).
- Ideally, the game starts with a group sitting in a big circle where players can see each other.
- The room should be divided into four different areas, representing the four political groups, allowing players to see the facilitator's screen at all times and not be disturbed by the other groups. The areas should be large enough to host a quarter of the players each.
- There should be two areas designated to host the committee groups. These could also encompass the areas designated to the political groups. The areas should be large enough to host half of the players each.
- The appointed spokespersons should have a spot from which they can address all players. It can be the same spot for all spokespersons. If the group sits in a big circle, spokespersons can simply stand up and speak.
- Each political group should have pens and activity cards (see **Annex II**) to write down their arguments and speaking points.

Important! If the ideal room set-up is not possible, feel free to be creative, but make sure that the facilitator's screen is visible to players at all times throughout the game.

3.5 Material



The virtual role play game can be played without any additional material. However, to give players the best possible experience, the following items are recommended:

- **Printouts of the activity cards to prepare the negotiations and speaking points (provided in Annex II)**
- **Printouts of the political groups' logos and committee signs (provided in Annex II) to mark the designated areas in the room**
- **Printouts of the QR code for players to easily access the game (provided in Annex II)**
- **Printouts of the feedback/evaluation forms (provided in Annex I)**
- **One pen per player**

Useful to have for the preparation of material:

- **Adhesive tape and scissors**
- **A printer**

3.6 Technical set-up

Hosting the game requires:

- an internet-connected device, such as a **laptop**, **PC** or **tablet** with a broadband connection of at least **5 Mbps**;
- a connected **monitor**, **projector** or **TV** large enough to be visible to all players, with a minimum screen resolution of **1280 x 720px**, and with built-in or external loudspeakers for the best experience;
- a modern web browser, such as:
  - **Chrome 96** and above,
  - **Firefox 95.0** and above,
  - **Safari 15** and above,
  - **Edge 96.0** and above.

Players need their own internet-connected device, such as a smartphone, tablet or laptop.

3.7
How to start and run the game

To start the game as a facilitator, go to http://vrpg.europarl.europa.eu. Choose your language from the dedicated menu, click on **'Start'**, and then **'New game'**. Select the scenario you wish to play, and then you will be presented with a joining screen and a room code. Additionally, you can show a QR code on screen by clicking the dedicated button on the lobby screen.

Players can join the game by going to http://vrpg.europarl.europa.eu/ (or scanning the QR code provided in **Annex II**) and clicking on **'Join game'**. They will be asked to enter the room code, which is shown on the facilitator screen. Alternatively, they can scan the QR code shown on the facilitator's screen, which will allow them to join the lobby directly. The room code is visible at all times during the game, as well as the button to show the QR code if needed.

Once everyone has joined, click **'Begin'** to launch the game. The game will mostly play out automatically, but requires the facilitator to start the in-room discussions and voting rounds. To support the facilitator with this, we have created a section in this guide called **'Step by step'** which gives you a detailed overview of the game sequences and our suggestions for facilitation.

Important! As a facilitator, you can pause and skip cutscenes and timed discussions including voting. But remember, you cannot go back to sequences you have skipped or already played!

If a player gets disconnected

If a player gets disconnected from the game because they accidentally close the browser, they can reopen their browser and join using the same method as they did originally.

If their browser remembers the URL they were last on, they will automatically rejoin the game. If a player loses connection for other reasons (internet connection, device timeout or similar), they will be notified that their device is attempting to rejoin the room. If the reconnection fails, they will be sent back to the join screen where they can type in the room code again and rejoin the room as themselves. The players can also simply refresh their browser to attempt to rejoin the game.

If disconnected for less than 30 minutes, the player will rejoin as the same MEP and political group.

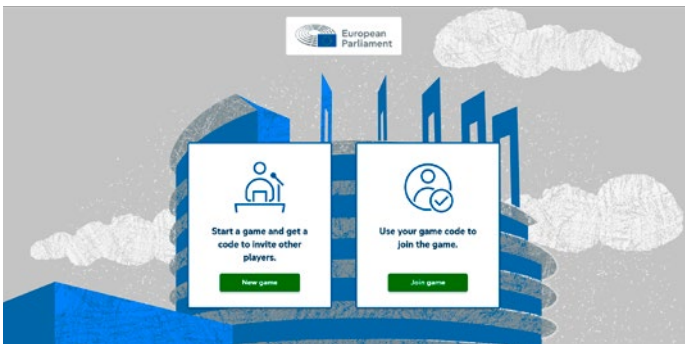
If idle or disconnected for more than 30 minutes, the player can still rejoin, but will get a new randomly assigned political group and name.

If the game needs to be restarted

If for any reason the game needs to be restarted, make sure you close the active browser and ask the players to do the same.

A new game session can be started immediately after closing the previous session by going to the front page of the game. Please note that all player devices would also have to go to the front page to rejoin (or scan the new QR code when given the option).





4
Step by step through the game

To support the facilitator's work, here is an overview of each of the game phases, including navigation and facilitation tips, as well as advice on how to best organise the session and the space.



In general, given the immersive nature of the game, it is recommended to encourage players to keep their questions for afterwards, for example during the debriefing session.

The game is designed to flow on its own, as the main characters – **Marie, the President of the European Parliament**, and the committee Chair – are guiding the players through every step." The facilitator's role is mainly ensuring that the players have the space, additional materials and technical support needed in order to best immerse themselves in their role as **MEPs**. At times, players might need gentle encouragement during debates and speeches, and in order to reach compromises for the benefit of the **EU's** citizens.

The only on-screen actions the facilitator needs to take are launching timed discussions, voting sessions and game sequences (prompts will appear on the facilitator screen). The facilitator may pause or skip timed sessions at any time via the dedicated buttons on the lower left side of the screen. However, it is not possible to go back to sequences that have been skipped or already played.

4.1 Starting the game

After clicking on **'Start'**, **'New game'** and selecting a scenario, instruct the players to join the game via the **URL** http://vrpg.europarl.europa.eu/ , by scanning the **QR code** included in **Annex II** or by scanning the QR code displayed by the facilitator on their screen. At this stage, players are assigned a fictional **MEP** name, country of origin and political group.

4.2 Introduction to the law proposal and game tutorial

After all the players have joined the game, **Marie, President of the European Parliament**, will welcome them as newly elected **MEPs**. After the facilitator clicks on **'Let's begin'**, Marie will present the details of the legislative proposal MEPs will be discussing, as well as some aspects of the gameplay.

4.3 Political groups introduction

In this phase, players should join the political groups they were assigned. Assignment is random and players cannot change their political groups once assigned. If you believe it may be difficult for the players to represent opinions other than their own, it is recommended to organise a session before the game for players to practise role playing. Suggested activities can be found in the section **'Before the game'**. To prepare for this phase, it would be ideal to have the room already divided into four different spaces labelled with the political group logos (Annex II). The facilitator should instruct the players to go to their political group space, get to know their fellow group members and start exploring their political group manifesto, their stakeholders' positions, and their amendments. If time allows, players are encouraged to read the other groups' materials too. In the same menu, in the lower right corner of their devices, players can also find the in-game rules.

It is advised to encourage players to use the activity cards to note down their amendments and other useful information, as well as to explore with which other political group they might be more likely to find a compromise.


Heart/Solidarity


Tree/Ecology


House/Tradition


Globe/Liberty

4.4
Committee groups introduction and vote

After getting familiar with their political groups' support material, players are introduced to the role of the parliamentary committees and then assigned to one of the two committee groups. For this phase, it is advisable to divide the space for the two groups, labelling the areas with 'Committee group 1' and 'Committee group 2' signs (Annex II). As there is no overlap between the work of the committees and political groups during the game, the room can be split in two, encompassing the areas already assigned to the political groups.

Players in their respective committee groups are invited to discuss, find a compromise and then vote on two (out of four) amendments to bring to the plenary. Please note that each committee group will be presented with a different set of amendments: eight amendments in total, four per committee group, but only two per group can go to plenary. During the discussion phase, you may want to encourage players to intervene and discuss with others in a respectful manner. You might find the activity cards (Annex II) useful for this!

During the voting phase, remind players to follow the instructions on their devices and vote for up to two amendments. They can also abstain on or reject all the amendments. Any votes not cast by the end of the timer will be counted automatically as an abstention. The players have to click on 'Submit vote' for their votes to be counted.

When time is up, the voting results will be displayed on the facilitator's screen. If no amendments receive a majority of votes, see section **4.10 ('In case of rejection')**.

4.5
Political groups regrouping

Players are invited to rejoin their political groups to discuss the amendments that have passed, how to vote in plenary and how to persuade other MEPs to support their position. At this stage, players are also invited to nominate a spokesperson. It's a good idea to remind players to prepare speaking points to present their group's opinion on the legislative proposal.

Encourage the players to use the activity cards **(Annex II)** to prepare their speaking points and arguments.


Heart/Solidarity


Tree/Ecology


House/Tradition


Globe/Liberty

4.6
Plenary discussion and voting part I

Players are invited to join the plenary session – instruct them to sit in a big circle so that everyone can see both the facilitator's screen and each other's faces. Although the layout of the **European Parliament** plenary is different, a big circle will ensure a more participatory and friendly approach to discussions. The central part of the circle can be used as the 'stage' for the spokespersons and any other Members who would like to take the floor. In fact, after each spokesperson has presented their group's position, as prompted by the game, any other Member can take the floor to add to the debate.

As a facilitator, make sure that each group and interested Member has their say within the time allocated by the game.

Once the speaking time is over, the game will open the voting session. Players will be invited to first vote amendment per amendment, just as MEPs do in real life (accept, reject, abstain), and then vote for the proposal as a whole.

Results will be displayed on the screen, and players will be able to see whether their negotiation skills have been effective.

If the position passes, Marie will forward it to the Council of the European Union.

In case of rejection, go to section 4.10 ('In case of rejection').



4.7 Big twist

An unexpected event affecting society pushes the **Council of the European Union** to significantly amend Parliament's position. Players are now obliged to rethink their positions and strategies and consider compromising.

4.8 Plenary session and voting part II

With the players still sitting in a big circle, a discussion session starts to allow **MEPs** to find a way forward: support the **Council's** amendments, go back to **Parliament's** original position or support a compromise amendment.

Players will be reminded that their role is to work in the best interests of **EU citizens**.

Once time is up, Marie announces whether the law has passed or not.

4.9 Stakeholders' reactions and game insights

After the results are announced, players will get to know stakeholders' opinions on the outcome and how it affects their lives.

Game insights will show information concerning:

- **the amendments that received the most overall support**
- **the political group that secured the best outcome for its stakeholders**

Both stakeholders' outcomes and game insights are interesting information for the debriefing session.

4.10 In case of rejection

If no amendments receive a majority in the committee or fail to pass at any of the two plenary phases, Marie will announce that the proposal cannot move forward. Players will be shown stakeholders' reactions, and the political groups' spokespersons will then be asked to address the media at a dedicated press conference to respond to the public's concerns.

In this case, players can use the activity cards **(Annex II)** to prepare their speeches and address the concerns about the lack of compromise.

5
Before the game

The virtual role play game can be played without any preparation by the players.

However, depending how much they already know about the European Parliament and the European Union, it may be useful to organise one or more preparatory sessions on the following topics:

- **How to represent opinions different from my own**
- **Getting to know the European Union**
- **Getting to know the European Parliament**

5.1
How to represent opinions different from my own?

In the game, players are randomly assigned to a political group, which means they can end up needing to represent opinions and positions that are different from their own. This is not an easy task for everyone. If you want to prepare your group for such a task, we recommend you organise a session for players to debate on different topics following the manifestos of the political groups.

The purpose of the exercise is to make sure the future players are comfortable when representing different opinions.

- Split the participants into four smaller groups (Tradition / Ecology / Solidarity / Liberty) with equal numbers of participants.
- Give each of the groups a printed version of their manifesto and give them 10 minutes to read it and discuss their group's values.
- Prepare the cards with topics you find relevant for the discussion and ask one of the participants to randomly pick one without seeing the content.
- Once the topic of the debate has been selected, give the players 10 minutes to prepare arguments in line with the manifestos assigned to them. Encourage participants to use the activity cards (Annex II) to prepare their arguments and speeches.
- Ask the participants to sit in a circle while you act as a moderator for the debate. Prepare three to five questions related to the topic of the debate. First, give each of the groups 1 minute to present their overall position on the topic, then start a round of questions, giving each of the groups a chance to respond. Allocate 20 minutes for the debate.
- Conclude the debate by thanking everyone for participating.
- Start the debriefing session by asking the participants:
    1. How difficult (or easy) was it for you to represent opinions that might be different from your own?
    2. What did you learn from this experience?
    3. What would you do differently next time?

Allocate 15 minutes for this part of the session.

Manifestos



Heart/Solidarity

We want a fair society based on solidarity that actively supports the poorer and weaker.

We encourage the EU and Member States' interventions to ensure equal access for everyone to basic rights, such as health, employment and education.

We believe that the greater good should always be more important than personal freedom.



Tree/Ecology

We believe that combating climate change and protecting the environment are priorities that the EU and Member States should defend and invest in.

We believe that solidarity and personal freedom should never be threatened.

We believe that society must reduce consumption and polluters should accept responsibility.



House/Tradition

We want to preserve stability by defending traditional values and pillars of society, like farmers.

We believe that modern society and government interference are a threat to tradition.

We support the EU and Member States' actions when they do not cause major changes and are not too expensive.



Globe/Liberty

We support businesses and innovation. They are the basis for a strong and growing society.

We believe that individual freedom should always be protected.

We believe that the EU and Member States should allow businesses a certain level of flexibility on how to tackle challenges.

5.2
Getting to know the European Union

Knowing the foundations, values, history and Member States of the European Union is important. The activities suggested below introduce the most important EU-related concepts to participants in a fun and engaging way, as they are based on 'game-based learning' methodology.

These activities were created for school classrooms as part of the educational tool **'Europe@school – Active lessons about the European Union'** and the **European Parliament's Ambassador School Programme (EPAS)**, but they can also be used in any other educational setting.

To help players prepare for the virtual role play game experience, we recommend the following modules:

- **The EU Member States (Module 2)**
- **EU history and facts (Module 3)**
- **The EU in our daily lives (Module 4)**
- **EU values (Module 5)**

Each module contains guidelines and materials to support facilitators. Activities last between 20 and 40 minutes. Additionally, you may refer to the following short animated videos (each under a minute) produced by the European Parliament.

Click the boxes to discover:

What is the EU?

What are EU values?

What powers does the EU have?

What is the EU single market?

The benefits of the European Union

What has the EU ever done for me?

What do I get from the EU?

How much does the EU cost me?

Is the EU still relevant?

5.3
Getting to know the European Parliament

The virtual role play game focuses on the European Parliament's decision-making process and a simplified version of the EU's legislative procedure. To understand Parliament better – how it works, its structure and how MEPs represent EU citizens – here are some resources to help players expand their knowledge and get the most out of the game:

- **Short videos about how Parliament works**
- **Digital Journey to the European Parliament**

Feel free to use the resources however best suits your situation – as a group or individual activity followed by a quiz, as an introduction to a debate or as part of the overall learning path about Parliament.



5.3.1 What is the European Parliament and how does it work?

The **European Parliament** has created a number of short videos (each under a minute) explaining in a simple and entertaining manner what it is and how it works.

We recommend watching at least the following videos:

What is the European Parliament?

European elections: how does voting work?

How do MEPs represent me?

How can you make your voice heard?

The EU decision-making process

5.3.2 Digital Journey to the European Parliament

The European Parliament's headquarters are in Brussels, Strasbourg and Luxembourg. Parliament also has a network of interactive multimedia exhibitions called **'Europa Experience'** across Europe.

However, not every EU citizen can visit Parliament or its other sites around Europe, so we have developed an additional set of tools to complement the in-person visiting options and bring Parliament closer to people in their homes, schools and communities.

The Digital Journey to the European Parliament consists of four free interactive experiences, available in the 24 official EU languages. It aims to give people the opportunity to get to know, discover and explore Parliament wherever they are, through immersive and interactive platforms.



How to incorporate these tools into your sessions on EU topics:

Experience Parliament in 360°

Bring your classes on **European** democracy to life by taking your pupils on a virtual tour to the heart of it all: the **European Parliament**.

With this experience, you and your students will be able to walk through the halls of the European Parliament in Brussels and Strasbourg, meet the President of the **European Parliament** and Members from the different political groups, and learn how Parliament delivers legislation that affects the life of every person living in the EU.

This tool can be used individually or in a classroom setting with a device connected to the internet and a screen/projector big enough for all students to see. The educator acts as the facilitator and leads the tour, which lasts around 20 minutes.

Start the tour

Virtual Tour of the House of European History

Show your students a different way of exploring the history of Europe!

With this browser-based virtual tour of the House of European History, you and your pupils can embark on a digital journey through the history of the European continent and explore the ancient roots of the people of Europe – what brings us together and what held us apart.

This tool can be used individually or in a classroom setting with a device connected to the internet and a screen/projector big enough for all students to see. The educator acts as the facilitator and leads the tour, guided by our expert curators.

Begin your tour

Introducing the Digital Journey to the European Parliament and its tools to the players before playing the virtual role play game can add to the immersive experience and provide them with a better understanding of the European Parliament's work through digital experiential learning.

Set off on your Digital Journey to the European Parliament

6
During the game

During the game, Marie and the committee Chair guide the players through each step.

Your task as facilitator is to ensure that the game is running smoothly and to remind the players to be aware of the time allocated for each task. As mentioned before, if you see that more or less time is needed for certain steps, you can always use the pause or skip buttons, depending on your needs.

We recommend you familiarise yourself with the following in-game features:

- **Reality checks**
- **Glossary**
- **Game rules**

6.1
Reality checks

Reality checks are bits of information scattered throughout the game that provide additional information regarding EU institutional procedures and/or clarify the difference between the game and real-life processes.

Reality checks appear as a static screen in the game and have no timer. This leaves it up to the game facilitator to decide how much time they want to dedicate to them. In order to keep players immersed in the game, we advise not to open any discussion at the reality checks stage but to wait for the debriefing session. The facilitator can move further in the game by clicking on 'Continue'.

Here you can find the complete list of reality checks in the game, along with a link to more detailed information.

The EU legislative process

Representing the common interests of the EU, the European Commission has the power to make law proposals.

The European Parliament then works together with the Council of the EU to turn the proposal into legislation by, when necessary, introducing amendments to the text and voting on them until they reach an agreement.

The EU legislative process.



The political groups of the European Parliament

The Members of the European Parliament sit in political groups organised by political affiliation, not nationality. There are currently 8 political groups in the European Parliament. While Members may not belong to more than one political group, they can decide not to align with any, and are known as 'non-attached'.

The European elections

Members of the European Parliament are elected by EU citizens every 5 years. The European Parliament is your voice and is the only directly elected European Union institution. The minimum age to be eligible to vote and to stand as a candidate is established by each Member State. Voting at the European elections is not only your right, but an opportunity to have your say on the future of the European Union.

Make your voice heard and vote!

Committees

In reality, committees are not divided into groups: they work as whole units. The President of the European Parliament decides which of the 20 standing committees will take the lead on a particular Commission proposal. Committees are established around different policies. Two or more committees can work together on a proposal in cases where it affects multiple policy areas.

Amendments

In real life, each MEP can suggest amendments (changes) to the law proposal in the committee where they sit. Several Members, even ones from different political groups, can also put forward an amendment together. Once adopted in committee, the text still needs the approval in plenary, where the same and also new amendments, can be introduced.

Amendment-by-amendment voting

In real life, all Members of the European Parliament vote again on each amendment one by one in plenary. A Committee, a political group or at least 40 Members together can also table new amendments. Once adopted in plenary, a text still needs to secure the approval of the Council to become a law. In some cases, the plenary can even just approve or reject the Council's position directly.



The Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the EU

The European Commission starts the procedure by putting forward a proposal for an EU law. The European Parliament, representing the citizens of the EU, and the Council of the EU, representing Member States' governments, are co-legislators: they have equal weight in the adoption and amendment of EU laws. Parliament acts first and may either reject the Commission's proposal, accept it as is, or amend it. The Council may then decide to accept Parliament's position, in which case the legislative act is adopted, or it may adopt a different position. If they still cannot reach an agreement, they enter negotiations. After these are concluded, both institutions can either vote in favour or against. The process shows how without agreement and compromise between these two institutions, there would be no EU law.

Trilogues

The review of the vote on amendments usually takes place in the form of a trilogue. Trilogues are informal meetings between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission. They can take place at any stage of the legislative procedure, with the purpose of reaching a provisional agreement on a text acceptable to both the Council and Parliament. In reality, the Council or any MEP may propose amendments at this stage. They often introduce hundreds, even thousands, of amendments to reports, which then have to be voted on.

Plenary and voting system

Members of the European Parliament meet together once per month on average, in plenary sessions. During these sessions, they debate and vote on law proposals which have been prepared for months by the committees and political groups. In order to be adopted, a law proposal has to gather a majority of the votes. When voting, Members can decide to either approve, reject or abstain. In case of abstention, the vote is not counted for the calculation of the majority.

Rejection of the proposal

If a legislative proposal is rejected at any stage of the procedure, or Parliament and the Council cannot reach a compromise, the proposal is not adopted and the procedure ends.

A new procedure can start only with a new proposal from the Commission.



6.2 Glossary



The glossary of all the important key terms for the player can be found in the menu in the player's device.

Amendment:

A change, addition or deletion to a text, such as a law.

Commissioner:

A **Commissioner** is a member of the European Commission, which is the executive branch of the European Union.

Commissioners are responsible for developing and implementing policies and legislation on behalf of the EU and they are appointed by the governments of EU Member States.

Each Commissioner is assigned a specific portfolio or area of responsibility, such as trade, environment or justice and consumers, and they work together to ensure that the EU operates effectively and in the best interests of its citizens.

Committee (Parliamentary committee):

Members of the European Parliament are divided in specialised committees, organised by area of expertise (e.g. environment – ENVI, employment – EMPL, etc.). Each committee elects a chair and up to four vice-chairs.

The committees' task is to do preparatory work for Parliament's plenary sittings, such as considering the Commission's legislative proposals and proposing text changes to reflect Parliament's position. Two or more committees can work together if the proposal concerns both groups' areas of responsibility.

The Parliament can also set up sub-committees and special temporary committees to deal with specific issues, and is empowered to create committees of inquiry to investigate alleged contraventions or maladministration of EU law.

Council of the EU:

The **Council of the European Union**, also known as the Council, or the Council of Ministers, represents the governments of EU countries.

It is made up of national government ministers from each Member State, grouped by policy area, who represent their own country's interests in the EU. It is responsible for coordinating Member States' policies in specific fields, developing the EU's common foreign and security policies, concluding international agreements, and, in parallel with the European Parliament, discussing and adopting the EU budget and EU laws.

European Commission:

The **European Commission** promotes the general interests of the EU. Every EU country nominates one Commissioner, who needs to be approved by the European Parliament.

The Commission is responsible for proposing new EU laws, implementing EU policies and the budget, making sure that EU countries follow EU law, and representing the EU internationally.

European Council:

The European Council represents the highest level of political cooperation between EU countries. Its meetings, called 'summits', take place four times per year in Brussels, where Heads of State and Heads of Government of all EU countries, chaired by a president, set the EU's main priorities and overall policy direction.

European Parliament:

The European Parliament is the voice of EU citizens and is the only directly elected European Union institution.

In fact, the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are directly elected by voters in all Member States to represent people's interests with regard to EU lawmaking and to make sure other EU institutions are working democratically.

Legislation:

The term in this context is used as a synonym for law or a set of laws.

Manifesto:

A **manifesto** is a public declaration of the beliefs, intentions and goals of a group, organisation or political party. It typically outlines the values and principles that guide the group's actions and policies, and may include specific proposals or recommendations for addressing social, economic or political issues.

Manifestos are often used as a tool for advocacy and to communicate a clear and cohesive message to the public or other stakeholders. They can be influential in shaping public opinion and policy debates, particularly during election campaigns or social movements.

MEP:

MEP stands for **'Member of the European Parliament'**. MEPs are elected officials who represent the interests of citizens of the European Union (EU) in the European Parliament.

The European Parliament is one of the main institutions of the EU and is responsible for passing laws, approving the EU budget, and holding the EU institutions accountable. MEPs are directly elected in each EU Member State, and they work in committees and plenary sessions to debate and vote on legislation and other matters related to the EU.

NGO:

NGO stands for 'non-governmental organisation'. An **NGO** is a non-profit organisation that operates independently of government and is usually driven by a particular social or political goal. NGOs can focus on a wide range of issues, including humanitarian aid, human rights, environmental conservation, education and public health.

They often work to address gaps in government services or advocate for changes in public policy. NGOs can be funded through donations, grants or partnerships with other organisations, and they may work at local, national or international level.

Plenary:

The **plenary**, also called plenary session or plenary sitting, is the forum in which the Members, the elected representatives of the citizens of the European Union, meet altogether to express their position on EU law proposals.

It is made up of 720 Members, affiliated to 8 different political groups (or attached to no group). Each Member is also part of a committee, depending on their area of expertise. The debates and votes taking place in plenary are the culmination of the legislative work done in the committees and political groups. The sittings are chaired by the President of the European Parliament.

Political Group:

The Members of the European Parliament sit in political groups organised by political affiliation, not nationality. There are currently 8 political groups in the European Parliament. While Members may not belong to more than one political group, they can decide not to align with any and are known as 'non-attached'.

Stakeholder:

A stakeholder is an individual, group of persons or organisation that can be positively or negatively impacted by a project, initiative or policy. A stakeholder can also be groups or people who represent particular interests, like environmental groups, NGOs, etc., and who could be consulted and/or involved in the decision-making process, to ensure that all consequences of the decision have been taken into account.

Together.eu:

Together.eu is a pan-European community that encourages everybody to participate in democracy and take action towards a brighter future in the European Union. It is a non-partisan initiative from the European Parliament. The together.eu community actively participates in and organises activities, events, campaigns and training surrounding EU democracy.

Trilogue:

Trilogues are informal meetings between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission. They can take place at any stage of the legislative procedure, with the purpose of reaching a provisional agreement on a text acceptable to both the Council and Parliament.

6.3 Game rules

The rules of the game can be found in the game menu.

Overview

You've assumed the role of a Member of the European Parliament and have been tasked with shaping a new piece of European law. To do this you'll need to debate, negotiate and vote along with your fellow MEPs while considering the manifesto of your political group and the opinions of European citizens as the law goes through the parliamentary process:

1. **Committee debate and vote**
2. **Political group discussion and spokesperson nomination**
3. **First plenary debate and vote**
4. **Second plenary debate and vote**
5. **Final result: will the law pass?**

Political group discussion

With your fellow political group members, think of arguments to convince the other groups to support the amendments you propose. Some rules of thumb for the negotiations and debates:

1. **Be respectful of other players' opinions and listen to their arguments**
2. **Share your arguments in a clear and concise way**
3. **Look for alternative solutions and compromises**
4. **You're shaping the future of your fellow European citizens: don't forget that how you vote will impact their lives!**

Committee vote

You have 5 minutes to decide which two amendments should be presented in plenary. Select up to two amendments on your screen and then submit your vote via the dedicated button.

An amendment will only pass if it receives a majority vote (more than 50%) from the committee group. A maximum of two amendments can pass from each group. If more than two amendments reach a majority, votes from MEPs of other political groups that you have convinced will be counted as double.

Spokesperson nomination

Together with your fellow political group members, you're invited to nominate a spokesperson to represent your shared position and ideas at plenary. You can do so by a simple show of hands or finding agreement with your fellow members.

As a spokesperson, you'll go to the front of the room and have 30 seconds to present your position and convince other Members at plenary. Once all groups have had their say, the floor will be open to any player who wishes to speak.

Speaking tips: Be as clear as possible and prepare your points in advance.

Stick to two or three points:

1. **this legislation is good/bad/acceptable because...**
2. **this legislation will mean that an ordinary EU citizen's life will be affected in a way...**
3. **state if your group is supporting the legislation or not**
4. **invite others to join your position**

First plenary vote

You are invited to vote on the whole law text, including the amendments that passed in the committee. You will have 30 seconds to accept, reject or abstain from the vote via the relevant buttons shown on your screen.

The law will pass if more than 50% of the total number of players choose to accept the law. If a player abstains, their vote is removed from the total number of players.

Second plenary vote

You are now presented with the amendments introduced by the Council, Parliament's initial amendments and an alternative compromise amendment. You have 30 seconds to choose which version you would like to support, or you can choose to abstain or reject the amendment completely.

Amendments will only pass if an option has a clear majority. In the case of a draw, the amendment will be rejected.

7
After the game

A follow-up session after the game is not mandatory but it is strongly recommended, as it is very useful.

In this chapter, you can find some suggested activities to conduct with your participants to understand what they learnt and how they can apply it to their daily lives, support them in understanding their own learning, or simply to find out what they liked about the experience and how it can be improved for next time.

You will also find information on how you can go a step further with your students and engage directly with Parliament through an online community or by visiting Parliament's interactive exhibitions in Member States' capitals.

7.1
Debriefing session

Debriefing with participants is the moment to take a step back, reflect on the activity, analyse the experience and understand what the group learnt.

The purpose of debriefing is to share the experience in a group and verbally express some of the emotions participants had during the experience, reflect upon the activity and share opinions, and discuss the learning and 'wow' moments.

It is also an opportunity to answer questions, find ways to transfer knowledge to daily life situations and apply the newly acquired knowledge. We recommend doing the debriefing session right after the game, while the experience and reflections are still fresh. The recommended duration is around 30 minutes, depending on the size of the group and how much depth you want to cover in the reflection work.

Below is a suggested approach to the debriefing session that can be adapted to suit your needs.

Emotions about the experience:

How do you feel after playing the game? What makes you feel like this?

Game flow:

Was it difficult/easy? What was the best/worst thing about it? Was it fun? Would you play it again?

What would you change?

Links to daily life:

How can you use this experience in your daily life? Can you give examples? How does it relate to your community? Does this experience motivate you to become more active?

Learning:

What did you discover about the European Parliament? About yourself?

What have you learned? Was it easy to negotiate and compromise? Was it difficult to represent opinions other than your own?

7.2 Written feedback or evaluation

The debriefing session is a good way to guide the players through their experience and understand their learning. It is important to provide an opportunity to the players to give anonymous feedback and evaluate the facilitator's work, overall conditions and the game itself.

If there is no time for debriefing, an evaluation form can be printed and distributed or provided via a link that will allow anonymised feedback.

In **Annex I**, you can find a series of questions related to the game mechanics and player experience. Feel free to ask all or a selection of questions in the evaluation or feedback form.

7.3 Together.eu

Together.eu is a project run by the European Parliament for anyone who wants to stand up for democracy in Europe. It is a community of individual citizens across the EU, but all kinds of civil society organisations and youth networks can also sign up as partners and supporters for the same cause.

Together.eu empowers all supporters of European democracy by making them stronger and more confident to raise their voice, share their values and act, thanks to the strength of a community. It welcomes volunteers of any age and any background as well as groups and organisations. Wherever you are, whatever you do, whatever your cause or beliefs, all we ask is that you share our commitment to democracy.

Encourage your students and participants to sign up.

7.4 Europa Experience offer

In order to come closer to people across the European Union, the European Parliament is continuously working on expanding opportunities for visitors beyond its headquarters in Brussels, Strasbourg and Luxembourg.

With this aim in mind, interactive multimedia spaces called 'Europa Experience' have already opened in a number of EU Member States.

By using cutting-edge multimedia tools, Europa Experience centres give visitors a chance to learn about the European Union and how it works, and how to engage in European democracy.

All visits to Europa Experiences are free of charge and are available in all 24 official European Union languages.

The offer can vary from centre to centre: from an immersive cinema experience about the EU, to interactive maps, to physical role play games and more.

8
Annexes

8.1
Annex I: Evaluation/Feedback form

Thank you for playing the game. Please provide honest and detailed feedback. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Please circle your answer under each statement.

1) The game instructions were clear.

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

2) The game makes the role of the European Parliament clear.

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

3) The game makes the decision-making process clear.

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

4) The game makes the amendments process clear.

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

5) After playing the game, I am more interested in EU-related topics.

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

6) After playing the game, I feel motivated to be more politically involved.

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

7) After playing the game, I feel more motivated to vote in the European elections.

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

8) How likely are you to play the game again?

☐ Very unlikely ☐ Somewhat unlikely ☐ Neutral ☐ Somewhat likely ☐ Very likely

Thank you for playing! :)

8.2
Annex II: Printouts for the game
VRPG Activity cards

Values and priorities

Together with the other members of your political group, use this card to define your current priorities. It will help to guide your negotiations during the committee and plenary sessions.

What are your priorities?

Have you identified any political group you could strike an alliance with?

Are there any amendments you absolutely cannot accept or any you could find a compromise on?

Public speech

Use this card to prepare your speech, whether it is in plenary session or in a press conference. Choose your arguments wisely, be concise and keep an eye on the time!

Some tips!

- **Be as clear as possible.**
- **Note down the two or three main points you want to convey.**

'This legislation is good/bad/acceptable because...'

'This legislation is/isn't in line with stakeholders' needs because...'

'We decided to support/not to support this EU legislation for the following reasons...'



Heart/Solidarity



Tree/Ecology



House/Tradition



Globe/Liberty

Committee group I

Committee group II



PLAY NOW!

http://vrpg.europarl.europa.eu

8.2 Annex II: Printouts for the game

Values and priorities

Together with the other members of your political group, use this card to define your current priorities. It will help to guide your negotiations during the committee and plenary sessions.

What are your priorities?

Have you identified any political group you could strike an alliance with?

Are there any amendments you absolutely cannot accept or any you could find a compromise on?

VRPG • Activity cards

Public speech

Use this card to prepare your speech, whether it is in plenary session or in a press conference. Choose your arguments wisely, be concise and keep an eye on the time!

Some tips!

- **Be as clear as possible.**
- **Note down the two or three main points you want to convey.**

'This legislation is good/bad/acceptable because...'

'This legislation is/isn't in line with stakeholders' needs because...'

'We decided to support/not to support this EU legislation for the following reasons...'